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Female self-employment among the Kleine Gemeinde in the Mennonite settlement of Blue Creek, Northern Belize

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Abstract: This study explores the underexposed possibilities of starting and running a business by Mennonite women in the Kleine Gemeinde community of Blue Creek, Belize.

The paper is the result of ethnographic fieldwork research combined with a literature study. We address the changing role of Kleine Gemeinde women in the Mennonite settlement of Blue Creek in Northern Belize, Central America. This Mennonite settlement has its roots in Canada. The labour system of the Mennonites enterprises is mainly organised independently from the general Belizean labour system with the help of their Canadian families. Mennonite women have gained a pivotal position in this independent system over the past years. Traditionally, Mennonite women stay at home to work in the domestic sphere. In recent years however, their role has changed and some women have started small enterprises at their home. In this article a description of two of these women of the Kleine Gemeinde church in Blue Creek will be presented. Mennonite female entrepreneurship in Blue Creek in Northern Belize is constructed on three principles, first their motivation to be an entrepreneur is symmetrical connected with the notion of mompreneurship, secondly they are basically self-employed and thirdly their way of doing business is strongly embedded in their religious-cultural environment. Future research might examine the ways in which these Mennonite women contribute to the notion of business possibilities through self-employment and entrepreneurial activities.

Keywords: Mennonites; entrepreneurship; self-employment; mompreneurship; Belize.

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Biographical notes: Carel Roessingh studied Cultural Anthropology and received his PhD at the University of Utrecht. His PhD research was on the Belizean Garifuna. His central research topic now is religious entrepreneurs, focusing on the organisational activities of the Mennonites in Belize and Central America. He works as an Associate Professor at the VU University Amsterdam, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Organisation Sciences. His publications appeared amongst others in journals as *Journal of Mennonite*

Studies, Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship, International Journal of Entrepreneurship & Small Business, International Journal of Business and Globalisation, International Journal of Innovation and Regional Development, Belizean Studies and he is a co-Editor of the book *between horse and buggy and four-wheel drive: change and diversity among Mennonite settlements in Belize, Central America*.

Margot Nuijten studied Culture, Organisation and Management and obtained her Master's of Science at VU University Amsterdam. She conducted research on Mennonite Female entrepreneurship in Blue Creek, Belize, during her master phase.

1 Introduction

Several Mennonite settlements distinguish themselves on both entrepreneurial activities as religious principles within the social-cultural context of Belize. Anderson et al. (2000) and Dodd and Seaman (1998) confirm that there is a linkage between religion and entrepreneurship. They demonstrate that religion does not only shape a contextual reality, but is shaped by the religious-cultural context as well. In other words they shape each other. In line of this argumentation Morrison (2000) argues that there is a significant relationship between entrepreneurship and cultural specificity and that the cultural context in which people develop themselves plays an influencing role in shaping and making entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurial behaviour that they aspire. Beside the cultural context, the other aspects which are required to be a successful entrepreneur are personality, intuition, society and a certain enterprising spirit (Morrison, 2000; Smits, 2006). The concept of self-employment should not be excluded in the discussion about the linkage between entrepreneurship and religion. According to Filion one can describe self-employment as 'a person working for himself or herself, and working basically alone, although possibly interacting with others as part of the work' (2004, p.311).

Self-employment can be divided into two types; involuntary and voluntary self-employment (Filion, 2004). The first group consists of people who came into a situation in which they had to create their own means of income by starting to work for themselves. This group of people never intended to be self-employed, but due to circumstances were forced to work for themselves. The second type of self-employment, the voluntary one, is people who always knew that they did not want to work for a boss and would rather work for themselves. The distinction between voluntary and involuntary self-employment can be compared to the two types of self-employment that Dana (1997) identified: orthodox entrepreneurship and reactive self-employment. In his research Dana took a closer look at the fundamental values of entrepreneurial actors to explain the roots of their decision to opt for entrepreneurship. In his article about the origins of self-employment in ethno-cultural communities Dana recognised four spheres of influence with respect to the origins of self-employment in ethno-cultural communities. The factors that influence the decision to become an entrepreneur are first of all a focus on the self, secondly a focus on the ethno-cultural milieu, a third focus on the host society, and finally the fourth sphere is a combination of these factors (Dana, 1997).

The first factor centres on the individual, the person as an entrepreneur. In this perspective entrepreneurship is more of a personal quality than it is a profession. One

needs certain traits to be able to overcome obstacles that an innovator faces when he exposes his or her ideas in public (Ripsas, 1998). Morrison (2000) elaborates that the process of entrepreneurship has its foundation in personal skills and intuition, but also in the society and its culture and that an enterprising spirit is necessary to be successful. 'The key to initiating the process of entrepreneurship lies within the individual members of society, and the degree to which a spirit of enterprise exists, or can be initiated' [Morrison, (2000), p.59].

In this respect not only the person but also the culture one lives in has a great influence on entrepreneurship (Dana, 2007; Smits, 2006; Roessingh and Smits, 2010). For Morrison (2000) both the culture of a society and the characteristics of the people who live in this society are substantial influences on decisions relating to entrepreneurship. This premises are directly in line with the second factor that Dana (1997) formulated as a sphere of influence for self-employment; the focus on the ethno-cultural milieu. Culture and background can be the variables that not only give people the drive to become a self-employed entrepreneur; they can also push people towards entrepreneurial activities. Cultural beliefs and values can persuade one into entrepreneurial behaviour. The third factor that can influence one's decision to become an entrepreneur is the focus on the host society. Dana and Dana (2007) are convinced that marginal groups have a sense of separateness from their host society and therefore construct their own adaptive mechanism through entrepreneurship. As a follow-up, entrepreneurship can lead to social recognition, status and respect. With regard to a combination of the three spheres of influence on entrepreneurship Dana (1997) concentrates on the resources that ethnic groups can use in their host society to expand their entrepreneurial activities.

In contrast with business studies that see self-employment as being self-sufficient, we argue that this explanation of the concept is too narrow. What the business analysts seem to overlook is that self-sufficiency sometimes means less independence and more homogeneity. Most business people involve their offspring in their work and new employees are usually members of the immediate family or are related to the same religious ethnic group (Kraybill and Nolt, 1995).

In this article we will explore the way self-employment contributes to female entrepreneurship within a Mennonite settlement in Belize, Central America.

2 Methodology

The data presented in this chapter are the result of an ethnographic research conducted in a Mennonite settlement in Belize from February until May 2010. As the Mennonites are an offshoot of the Anabaptists and are known for their entrepreneurial activities in Belize, they will be considered as what Aldrich and Waldinger (1990) describe as ethnic entrepreneurs. The ethnic identity of the Mennonites can be found in their common religious belief, their basic assumptions on life values and life style, and their shared migration history from Western Europe towards Belize. In their research among the Mennonites in Belize, Roessingh and Plasil (2009) focused on entrepreneurship and changes in the use of technology within different Mennonite settlements.

Compared to other Mennonite settlements in Belize, the settlement in Blue Creek is the most developed in terms of their use of technology, their social-economic position

and management thoughts. Since the intention is to offer an insight into the daily life settings of the Mennonite entrepreneurs, qualitative research methods were used to collect information about the Mennonite companies and the role of self-employment within the settlement. An advantage of qualitative research is that it aims at an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the participants' social world by learning about the context (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). As a method to gather information about the daily routine of the Mennonite entrepreneurs we used participant observation. Next to participant observation informal conversations and semi-structured interviews were used to collect information on the entrepreneurial activities and self-employment within the settlement. Academic literature and data of earlier fieldwork served as input for a topic list that was created in order to organise the process of data collection in the field. As the research progressed this topic list changed to more specified terms and was extended with extra subjects to investigate.

Near the end of the research some more structured interviews were held in order to fill the gaps or to obtain more detailed information. Informants were mainly approached after, and as a result of, previous interviews with respondents. This method of sample selection is called snowballing (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). In the course of the research findings were related to the academic literature to be able to gain a deeper analytic perception. In the next paragraph we will explain the Mennonite background and clarify the context of this research.

3 The Mennonites as a cohesive group within the Anabaptist movement, and their road to Belize.

The Mennonites are a religious group of people who came to Belize in 1958. They hailed from Mexico and Canada, but a long history lies behind this. The Mennonites originate from the Anabaptist movement of the Protestant Reformation in Europe during the first half of the 16th century (Everitt, 1983). This movement has its origin in a 'religious-social rebellion' in 16th century Europe [Redekop, (1989), p.6]. The term 'Anabaptist' stands for 're-baptiser', which means that this religious group believed that adults should be baptised based on their choice to follow Christ. In contrast to the then popular approach that children should be baptised soon after birth, the Anabaptists thought that the basis of faith must be a conscious rational decision. The Anabaptists were convinced that a clear distinction was needed between church and government. Therefore, they rejected the authority of a civil/religious government, demanding to baptise children, swear oaths and join military service, because they felt that the scripture suggested a different approach to a life of faith (Kraybill and Bowman, 2001; Ryman, 2004).

A Catholic priest from a town called Witmarsum in the western part of *Friesland* in the Netherlands, whose name was Menno Simon (1496–1561), became an important leader of the Anabaptist movement. The Anabaptists first emerged in Switzerland, during a time of important social and religious conflicts all over Europe. From the start there have been many separations within the Anabaptist movement with regard to religious principles, ideas and opinions (Kraybill and Bowman, 2001; Urry, 1989). One of the earliest schisms was the breakaway of the followers of Jacob Amman (the Amish) from the movement in 1693 (Kraybill, 1989; Hostetler, 1993). Other groups within the Anabaptist movement are the Brethren and the Hutterites (Kraybill and Bowman, 2001).

A specific group of Anabaptists around Menno Simons, situated in the Northern part of the Netherlands and Germany, formed a cohesive community and were soon called 'the followers of Menno'; the Mennonites.

The Anabaptist distinguished themselves from other movements by their requirement for a separation between religious life and state control, their claim to pacifism and their demand to live in self-controlled communities. The Mennonites, as other Anabaptist groups, are not organised in churches but in congregations or communities (Redekop, 1989). The concept of community (*Gemeinde*) has been and still is very important. The Mennonites distance themselves from certain principles such as worldliness, which means that they believe in 'separation from the world' [Loewen, (1993), p.17]. They aspire to maintain their traditional way of life as much as possible by rejecting influences from the world outside of their communities. Due to this they have little contact with the outside world and are recognised as being focused inward. In their attempt to preserve their traditional way of life the Mennonites have been forced to migrate several times, because they were often seen as antagonists by the ruling churches and governments in the countries they lived in. They first migrated to Poland and Prussia, then to Russia, from where they moved between 1874 and 1880 to Manitoba, Canada (Loewen, 1993; Roessingh and Plasil, 2009). Once in Canada the Mennonites could still not escape from the country's legislation, so the most traditional Mennonites decided to move further south into the Americas, to countries like Bolivia, Paraguay and Mexico (Loewen, 2006). In 1958 a group of the followers of the *Kleine Gemeinde* and a group of Old Colony congregation left their settlements and relocated in Belize.

4 A new country called Belize

Belize, formerly known as British Honduras, is a small country that borders Mexico and Guatemala. The country covers 22,966 square kilometres of the Central American continent and has approximately 300,000 inhabitants (Belizean Government, 2010). Belize is a multi-ethnic society with the Mestizo and Creole as the largest ethnic groups, and English as its official language. The Mennonites arrived in Belize in 1958. In 2010 4.1% of the inhabitants were Mennonites (Belize Government, 2010).

The ethnic identity of the Mennonites is based on a combination of shared assumptions, life values and life style (Roessingh, 2007). Their religious beliefs are based on the way they interpret and use the Christian religion to fulfil their life. According to Everitt (1983) the Mennonites developed their farming to be an important addition to Belizean agriculture and food production. Nowadays Mennonite entrepreneurs lead the national market when it comes to milk, dairy products and poultry (Roessingh and Boersma, 2011). They often visit shops and supermarkets in the cities to sell their products and some Mennonite companies even export their goods.

The government of Belize accepted the Mennonites because they were known for their agricultural skills. The Mennonites were allowed to stay in order to give an impulse to the agriculture in Belize, which at the time was not functioning, and the Belizean government gave them the space to do this by signing the *Privilegium* (Mol, 2005). In this document the Mennonites' exemption of military duty, their freedom to establish their own schools, the right to have their own social system and the abandoning of swearing the oath were included. Their obligations towards the Belizean government

were also described: the Mennonites had to bring in investment money, had to produce for the local market and export, and must pay regular taxes (Higdon, 1997). With this agreement the Belizean government aimed at an improvement of the economical situation of the country.

The Mennonites who bought land in the Orange Walk district, in which Blue Creek is situated, were members of the Old Colony congregation, a group that originated from a split in Canadian Mennonite settlements in the 1870s and that was known for their traditional way of life. Outsiders used the name Old Colony to refer to “those people who were loyal to a rigid belief-system and a traditional way of life” [Redekop, (1969), p.10]. This name was also adopted by the members themselves.

Members of the Old Colony church aim to preserve their lifestyle and reject innovations and modern technology (Roessingh and Plasil, 2006). Horse and buggy is still the main use of transportation within Old Colony communities. As the Old Colony Mennonites maintained their traditional values in life and in their agricultural practices, they experienced more problems than other communities in expanding their cultivated acreage (Hillegers, 2005). The group that came down to settle in Spanish Lookout, in the Cayo district, and later in Blue Creek, in the Orange walk district, derived from the *Kleine Gemeinde* congregation that was founded in 1874 as a response to the establishment of the Russian Mennonite Church (Loewen, 1993, 2006; Roessingh and Mol, 2008). Originally this congregation led a traditional life, but the *Kleine Gemeinde* Mennonites became more progressive after their migrations towards Belize. Over the years another Mennonite congregation called the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Church (EMMC) came to Belize. This congregation had its roots in Canada and built its first church in Belize in Blue Creek and later on in Spanish lookout. The EMMC church is the most progressive congregation within the Belizean Mennonite settlements. Services on Sunday, in contrast with the other congregations in Belize, are active, women and men are sitting side by side and the sermons are accompanied by music. During the week several bible study groups are organised in people’s houses.

Blue Creek can be seen, together with Spanish Lookout, as the more progressive Mennonite settlements in Belize. Both EMMC and *Kleine Gemeinde* congregations approve the use of modern technology, which resulted that both settlements have a strong economic position and an intensive economic exchange beyond the boundaries of their settlements.

5 Blue Creek: a Mennonite settlement in the Orange Walk District

Blue Creek is located in North-western Belize, east of the Guatemalan border, south of the Mexican border and near the intersection of the Azul, Bravo and Hondo rivers. This isolated area is part of the Orange Walk district of Belize. Driving from the city of Orange Walk to Blue Creek, you follow an unpaved, bumpy road, passing small Belizean villages called Yo Creek, Trinidad, San Lazaro, August Pine Ridge and San Felipe. After a one-hour drive the hills of Blue Creek appear in sight and once you have crossed a little bridge across the Bravo, the road is paved again. You have now arrived in Blue Creek.

When the Mennonites arrived in Blue Creek in 1958 this area was nothing more than a tropical jungle interspersed with swamp savannas and though soils (Hillegers, 2005). The Mennonites had to overcome difficulties related to the agro environment and

suffered from the malaise caused by the tropical climate that was new to them. They also had to learn how to grow crops in this climate and changed to different products than they were used to cultivate; from oats and wheat in Canada and Mexico to rice, beans and tropical fruits in Belize.

In the first years a shift from a traditional towards a more progressive Mennonite life style took place in the settlement; the frictions about the use of technology became stronger. Some men were convinced that it was impossible to clear the land with steel tires, whereupon they started to use machines with rubber tires. For this reason the majority of the Old Colony Mennonite congregation left Blue Creek and started a new settlement located about 25 km eastwards: Shipyard. Since the uproar in the community kept on going, the EMMC congregation from Canada sent help in order to structure and organise life in the settlement. The EMMC started to build a new school, church and clinic for the people who had turned away from the Old Colony and peace returned. What once was a jungle has been transformed over the years into cultivated hills where crops are grown and cattle are raised. In 1978 the Old Colony partisans had become a minority in the settlement and most of them left for Bolivia, whereas others joined the Kleine Gemeinde congregation (Kok, 2006).

Nowadays, followers of the Kleine Gemeinde live in harmony with the EMMC Mennonites in Blue Creek. Both congregations have their own school, clinic and shops. Nowadays, in 2010, the settlement counts about 750 inhabitants and is known as an advanced Mennonite community in the country. The progressive Mennonites distinguish themselves by making use of modern technology and a more developed economic system of commercial agriculture and agribusiness in their settlement (Roessingh and Schoonderwoerd, 2005; Roessingh and Boersma 2011). The organisations in the community do not only produce in order to supply the inhabitants of Blue Creek, but export their products to the local market as well. The Mennonites have created a well-organised network of distribution and transport and deliver quality products; this way their organisations have become dominant businesses in the country.

6 Blue Creek: the women in Blue Creek

Most women in Blue Creek belong to one of the two Mennonite congregations (EMMC or Kleine Gemeinde) and this evolves a lifestyle which is determined from their religious background. Since Blue Creek is a relative small settlement most people know each other and have opinions about others. The traditional way of living as a Mennonite in an excluded settlement remains highly valued in Blue Creek and intends that women take care of their household and children and men do the hard work on the farm (personal journal, February 15-2010). In a man's opinion being a housewife is a "very important job too, and it saves me[n] a lot of money" (Abram, personal journal, February 9-2010). Martha, Abram's wife, always has had the feeling that she should work outside her household in order to earn money. However, Abram says that since his wife did all the cooking, cleaning and raising the children Martha saved him money, because otherwise somebody who should have been paid for these jobs. In Blue Creek men notably praise their wives in relation to their work in the household and more is not asked from them. There are more jobs in the household than you would think of at first, which are all included in daily or weekly routines by the Mennonite women in Blue Creek.

Blue Creek is a separate settlement with limited resources. The women in Blue Creek have learned to live with the resources they have available and know very well how to cope with possible shortcomings or unavailable products. In Blue Creek there are only a couple of (small) grocery stores which have restricted supplies. Therefore, when it is the season for a certain fruit or vegetable the women are in charge of the processing and canning of these goods. This results into very productive days of cutting, slicing, cooking, and canning tomatoes into tomato sauce, ketchup and salsa. Besides this extra work the regular routine maintains since the cows still need to be milked and bread needs to be baked. In the stores there are limited pastries and breads, in spite of or thanks to these restricted availability Mennonite women are known for their amazing baking and cooking skills. Many recipe books with 'Mennonite treasures' are published and can be found in their households or more likely in the Kleine Gemeinde community on hand-written note cards with age-old recipes like their great-grandma's used to make. These recipes usually contain large quantities. Therefore, in many households there is a weekly planning including specific days when they bake buns and sweets to be sure they always have enough.

7 Kleine Gemeinde women in Blue Creek

This article focuses on the Kleine Gemeinde women of Blue Creek in relation to their self-employment and female entrepreneurship. In Blue Creek the Kleine Gemeinde Mennonites live in the nearby their church in Edental. Edental is located at the 'end' of Blue Creek near the Mexican border. The members of Kleine Gemeinde congregation are more conservative compared to the EMMC Mennonites. The women are easy to recognise with their long dresses with flower prints on them. These dresses are often homemade, which explains why several girls and women have dresses of the same pattern. The homemade dresses are a starting point for female entrepreneurs since some of the women are experienced in sewing and easily make some extra money with sewing for friends and family. This article highlights the entrepreneurial activities of two Kleine Gemeinde women in Blue Creek.

7.1 Entrepreneur and housewife in one: Aganetha

The first woman (Aganetha) can be taken as example for sewing dresses. She is best described as homemaker and self-employed entrepreneur in one. Aganetha is married with Jakob. Aganetha and Jakob have four children between the ages of six and 14 and own a house with a large piece of land. Aganetha has to take care of the four at-home-living children and she offers her husband assistance with their 16,000 chickens, 3,000 turkeys and 30 cows. Besides her regular duties of taking care of the family she makes a little money herself. She earns money with sewing dresses, selling milk and cheese, slaughtering turkeys and chickens on request, and by selling homemade pastries to the local chicken factory.

Aganetha's life story is a clear example of the Mennonite life as a woman, including entrepreneurial businesses. Her motto is "There is always a job to do around the house! I'm used to always work hard". Aganetha was born in Blue Creek 42 years ago when it was still an Old Colony community. She is the oldest of thirteen children, nine boys and four girls. When Aganetha married Jakob she had to get used to a new lifestyle, since she

was raised with the mentality that there is always a job to do, and in Jakob's family there was time to relax. As a result of Aganetha's mindset to always work hard she started sewing dresses for other women in the Kleine Gemeinde community to keep herself busy and to help others. The dresses the Kleine Gemeinde women wear require some practice in sewing because of the folds and complicated patterns. Over the years Aganetha became a sufficient and quick sewer. Aganetha charged 20 Belize Dollar to make a dress, but the ladies who wanted her to sew a dress had to provide the materials themselves, including the fabric and a pattern. Besides sewing dresses she found another way to start an additional business, namely making cottage cheese. Aganetha and Jakob have beside their 30 cows, two cows to provide their family with milk, and with the extra milk she started making cottage cheese which she sold to other community members and to Kleine Gemeinde members in Spanish Lookout.

Beside the two cows for milk the family has also two pigs which are currently nourished and they will be slaughtered when big enough. Aganetha milks the cows twice a day by hand and directly after milking she pasteurises the milk with the hand-machine positioned in her kitchen. With this process she separates the milk and cream which she uses for baking. Left over cream is sold to community members. With the additional milk Aganetha still makes cottage cheese which she sells mostly in buckets to a woman in Spanish Lookout, who then sells smaller portions in her community. When she has made enough cottage cheese for Spanish Lookout she finds someone in the settlement who will drive there for his or her own business, in order to take the buckets. Often Aganetha her uncle Abram is delivering the buckets, in that manner she has no extra costs to get the cottage cheese to her customer.

Besides Aganetha's dairy products she continues to sew dresses for anyone who wants her to, only did she higher the price to 30 Belize Dollar for a dress excluding the materials. Thus, over the past 20 years the price for a dress increased with ten Belize Dollar. We have the idea that with all her 'businesses' Aganetha is doing it to help others and to be able to do something instead of making money. Nevertheless, there are more activities to keep Aganetha busy 'helping others' and to make money for her own family. These activities are the slaughtering of turkeys on request and baking sweets for the workers in the Caribbean Chicken factory, the big chicken slaughter firm in Blue Creek. About a year ago Aganetha was asked to start baking pastries for Caribbean Chicken on Mondays and Thursdays, since these are the days the factory is operating. For these days she prepares different kinds of sweets that are brought fresh to the factory in the early morning (most likely by her daughter Virginia since Aganetha is milking the cow at that time). In order to have fresh sweets she makes them on Wednesdays and Saturdays, since Sunday is a day to rest and to prepare you for Monday when the new week starts. Thus, on the days Aganetha bakes she is combining her tasks as a housewife/ mother and as a self-employed entrepreneur.

Aganetha learned at a young age to slaughter animals like chickens and turkeys and indeed she enjoys this job. Nowadays, there are women in Blue Creek who not much enjoy this or they may not even know how to do this kind of work. For these women there is the possibility to buy meat in the stores for a higher price or find someone to do the slaughtering for you. For these women Aganetha offers assistance, since she will slaughter for you upon request. A customer can tell Aganetha how they want the meat and Aganetha will deliver the prepared meat later the same day. For this whole morning of working with the turkey meat Aganetha charges \$35 Belize for labour costs. Whenever

there is the need for Aganetha to sew a dress, bake for Caribbean Chicken, slaughter turkeys or make cottage cheese she implements these activities in her regular daily routine. When looking back on the days we spent with Aganetha we believe that this labour is fully incorporated into her life. Meaning that this is the way she has accepted to live, a lifestyle including hard work, because “there is always a job to do” (Aganetha).

7.2 *The laundry-lady: Margaretha*

The following story presents Margaretha, a hardworking mother and grandmother who owns a laundry business and a sewing shop. Margaretha is 59 years old, she looks like she is much older due to a skin disease and the hard life in Blue Creek. Margaretha came to the jungle when she was still a young girl. She has seen the changes and the hardship of the first years in Blue Creek.

In 1992 Margaretha was asked by the workers at La Milpa, an archaeologist's site near Blue Creek, if she knew of someone who could start doing their laundry. In spite of the fact that she still had children living at home, she did agree to start a laundry business. However at that time, with her children at home, it was not possible to take the whole commission. At that time she passed the biggest laundry load on to somebody in the family circle who had the time and the space to do this job. But she still kept the commission on her own name. Nowadays, she is in charge of all the laundry business from La Milpa. The archaeologists are not doing research all year round, this means that there is a low and high season in this business. During the months of the year that the archaeologists are not at La Milpa there is still a weekly load of laundry from the guesthouses and lodges in the area. Starting with the commission to wash the clothes of the archaeologists at La Milpa, Margaretha needed to invest in more washing machines, which over the years increased to a number of two washing machines, two hand washing machines and two dryers. In the busy season there are between 100–120 archaeology students, whom all have certain days on which they are allowed to bring their laundry to Margaretha. Most of the laundry dries outside on one of the long laundry lines in Margaretha's garden and it is only when the need is there that the dryers are used, to keep the costs as low as possible. In the morning several loads are brought to Margaretha's house, which is collected again clean and folded the day after when the new load is delivered. Today the laundry business has increased tremendously and Margaretha has several Mennonite girls and women and Mestizo women from the neighbourhood villages helping her doing all the loads in the busy season running from May to July each year.

Besides the laundry business Margaretha runs a small fabric and sewing material shop from home. This ‘shop’ is located in her own bedroom. Nevertheless, it is a frequent visited store by many Kleine Gemeinde women for whom the other shop where they can buy fabric's and sewing material is too far to drive. This shop is in another area in Blue Creek, Linda Vista. This indicates that Blue Creek encloses a very large area. For the women who do their shopping at Margaretha's bedroom shop the variety of fabric, needles and thread is more than satisfying. Margaretha and her husband Paul also have cattle and a chicken barn. One of the reasons that Margaretha is doing her own businesses is because she enjoys doing something else beside regular household chores. Margaretha loves to be in contact with other people and she likes to help community members and to assist them with their household questions. With her sewing shop she has the opportunity to keep in contact with other ladies who come to visit her on a daily basis and

not only through the weekly church visit. In Margaretha's life her household is the most important thing after which she runs her businesses 'just for fun' and to help others. It says something important about her perceptions about running a business during the time she still had children living at home, at that time she did not take all the work she was asked to do, but she passed this on to another family member in Blue Creek. Margaretha provides a clear example of someone who is helping out others and not seeing herself as a money maker.

8 Mompreneurship: self-employment and an embedded way of entrepreneurship: a conclusion

Both Redekop et al. (1995) and Regehr (1988) emphasise that the economy of a Christian based society as the Mennonite community is based on a network of personal relationships. Over the years the Mennonites developed a strong set of values and beliefs that were focused on living in harmony, supporting fellow believers through mutual aid, economic support and encouraging members to remain faithful (Epp, 2004; Ryman, 2004). Elements such as trust, goodwill and mutual aid contribute to the productive Mennonite lifestyle (Roessingh and Smits, 2010). Also cultural resources such as an energetic work ethic, managerial skills, frugality, strong kinship networks and large stable family units facilitate the Mennonites in expanding their entrepreneurial activities (Epp, 2004; Kraybill and Nolt, 1995). Mennonites are known for their hard work, their sincere attitude, and their quality goods and services that generate opportunities for broader economic possibilities (Ryman, 2004).

But in what way do the female Mennonites in the communities or settlements where they live benefit of these broader economic possibilities? Over the past decade an increasing amount of attention is placed on female entrepreneurs since this group has grown over the years, nevertheless more focus lies on the fact why there are still fewer women than men as entrepreneurs. However, Korsgaard (2007) emphasises the "desire to balance family life and entrepreneurial life" women may have and therewith introduces the concept 'mompreneurship'. He elaborates that this study derived from a discourse analysis on the internet where several websites are concerning this topic. The topic 'mompreneurship' is not yet researched from a social science perspective and therefore the concept can only be introduced in this research since it may well be a related concept to female Mennonite entrepreneurs. Let us therefore start with the definition Korsgaard gives to the concept, "mompreneurs are female business owners actively balancing the roles of mother and entrepreneur" (2007, p.42). He argues that this concept is recently defined and only starting to be researched. From a study in 2007 he conducted with Neergaard, they analysed the elements of mompreneurship. The first element is the "need to strike a balance between the needs of one's workplace or career on the one hand and the needs of one's family on the other" and the second is the requirement for a work environment without having the concern 'with the needs of one's family' thus the supervision at home [Korsgaard, (2007), p.43]. One of the arguments of women is that they like to be able to work at home to be with their children when they are at home and to have the ability to work at hours they choose themselves. Korsgaard (2007, p.44) concludes that "mompreneurship is a strategy used to create continuity and to minimise conflict between the relevant spheres of life (motherhood and work)".

The aim of this article has been to elaborate on the extent to which self-employment has influence the possibilities to expand female entrepreneurship within the Mennonite settlement of Blue Creek in Northern Belize. After a theoretical review we described the context of our research among the Mennonites in Belize and illustrated a case to support the research results.

In fact you could make the argument that the two cases of this article are ladies who employed them self because of a need in their environment. In this way of thinking we join the statement of Dana and Dana (2007) that marginal groups for example the Mennonite women in Belize have a sense of separateness from their host society and therefore construct their own adaptive mechanism through entrepreneurship which in our case is based on the position of the Mennonite women in their communities and the rather isolated location of Blue Creek and other Mennonite settlements in Belize. In line with the statements of Korsgaard the Mennonite women want to do their business at home which because that would be the most acceptable way to act as an entrepreneur. Another aspect is the fact that they are part of a network based on their religion and ethnic background, through that they do not take the risk of going into business with products which do not connect with the demand of the market. In this way this type of mompreneurship is also connected to another notion which we can call embedded entrepreneurship. Embedded because their way of doing entrepreneurship is intrinsically based on their place and position as Mennonite female participants of the Kleine Gemeinde community and in broader sense of the Blue Creek settlement.

In sum we conclude that Mennonite female entrepreneurship in Blue Creek in Northern Belize is constructed on three principles, first their motivation to be an entrepreneur is symmetrical connected with the notion of mompreneurship, secondly they are basically self-employed and thirdly their way of doing business is strongly embedded in their religious-cultural environment.

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